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ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
Washington 25, D. C.

22 August 1961

International Security Affairs
1 16,034/61

MEMORANDUM FOR: SEE LIST OF PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

SUBJECT: Proposed Game on the Berlin Situation

1. USA is sponsoring a game type analysis of the Berlin situation to be prepared by the RAND Corporation under its ISA contract, and to be conducted with the participation of high level officials from the White House, State, Defense and CIA.

2. Attached hereto is a brief description of the purpose and nature of this exercise. Knowledge of this activity must be closely held. Misinterpretations (within the Government as well as in the public domain) could obviously be very damaging at this time. Consequently, it is planned to identify this exercise with the cover title of "Conference on NATO Long Range Planning". Since intensive work over a considerable number of hours is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this exercise, it is planned to hold it outside of (but as convenient as possible to) Washington and over a weekend. The present plan is to utilize the period from Friday evening, September 8th, through Sunday afternoon, September 11th. My office is currently discussing with the White House the possibility of utilizing Camp David for this exercise.

3. The game will involve a red and a blue team of 4 members each, drawn from the White House, State and Defense, with a control team drawn from the foregoing agencies, CIA and the RAND Corporation. The total number of principals involved will be approximately 12 with an additional 6 professional people and 12 to 15 administrative-clerical-support personnel.

4. I believe that the values of this game will be such in relation to the Berlin situation that participants will find the time spent well worth while.

Paul H. Nitze
Paul H. Nitze

Inclosures - 2

EXCLUDED FROM AUTOMATIC
REGRADING: DOD DIR 5200.10
DOES NOT APPLY

DECLASSIFIED

E. O. 11652, SEC. 3(E), 5(D), 5(E) AND 11

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BY *EA* NARS, DATE *12-4-78*

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LIST OF PROPOSED PARTICIPARS

White House

McGeorge Bundy
Walt Rostow
Carl Kaysen
Henry Kissinger
Dean Acheson

CIA

James Hitchcock

JCS

Gen. Gray
* Gen. Rowley
Gen. Nielson
Col. from Joint War Games
Control Group

State

Jeff Kitchen
Martin Hillenbrand
* Frank Cash
* Peter Day
Henry Owen
Roger Hillman
* Abe Chayes
Richard H. Gardner

Observer-Administrative Group

Tom Schelling (RAND) and one
other RAND person
T. W. Stanley (ISA) and/or
L. C. McQuade (ISA)

ISA

Henry Rosen
* John McNaughton
Col. Armstrong
* Col. Moody
* Adm. Lee
Col. Wolfe

* Alternate

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BERLIN DECISION EXERCISE

Game-like exercises emphasize uncertainty--the "fog of war". They emphasize the bargaining relation between adversaries--the need to communicate intent by actions and to design actions accordingly, and to interpret the other side's intent. They particularly emphasize the interaction between adversaries' decisions--the need to anticipate countermeasures and counter-countermeasures and to identify what the adversary thinks he is countering. Decision-games also stress the speed of events--the need to prepare responses in advance for contingencies in which there will not be time for centralized review of the situation. And they stress speed of decision--the need to eschew information and analysis that cannot be brought to bear in time.

Decision games are time-consuming; and, since the main benefit is to the participants, they cannot usefully be turned out. They work best for issues that have come into sharp focus and for situations in which the speed of events would force concentration on a reduced set of options.

In the Berlin crisis, a decision game is more suitable to military moves than to pure diplomacy. The game proposed will therefore assume a point in time at which some military step is imminent or under way. (A "scenario" will set up that point in time.) This is not to prejudice the question of whether "negotiation" or "action" will decide the outcome on Berlin; negotiation itself depends on an exploration of what happens if negotiation fails. (Negotiation, by actions as well as words, continues anyway.)

Design of the Exercise

The scheme of the game is like that worked out by Bloomfield, Milikan and Schelling at MIT/Harvard last year and applied to a hypothetical middle-eastern crisis. It has been modified and tried at RAND on the Berlin issue.

It consists of a series of policy-planning sessions, the first taking off from a prepared scenario. At each session the Red and Blue teams evaluate their objectives and choices and each other's probable actions and draw up their "strategies". A strategy is a statement not just of immediate moves and definite future moves, but of anticipated adversary moves and adversary responses and the contingent steps the team will take according to what the adversary does. These strategies are drawn up by Red and Blue simultaneously, as of a given moment in time.

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Because the strategies are drawn to cover the main foreseeable contingencies, they can (taken together) be projected to a future point in time by the Control Team, which adds to the projection events outside the control of Red and Blue. Since Red and Blue act just for the Soviet and U.S. Governments, the Control Team can affect the pace of the game through the decisions and events it imputes to third countries and acts of God.

The projection of Red and Blue strategies sets up the point of departure for the next strategy session. (The projection is, in effect, the original scenario carried forward on the basis of the teams' decisions.) Red and Blue receive separate projections since the intelligence to the two teams differs.

Four such sessions will exhaust two days. At the end of the fourth session, the full documentation of each team's strategies and the intelligence provided at each stage by Control is made available to the other team. In the fifth session all three teams, Red, Blue and Control, separately evaluate the likely outcome on the basis of the full documentation. The sixth session is a plenary discussion of the entire experience.

The teams would not try to predict or to imitate actual Soviet or American behavior, but to develop the best strategies they can that are consistent with each side's objectives. (The game explores what each side could do, not what they would do.) The Control Team must impute plausible actions to other countries but is not limited to "best" predictions and will, in particular, use its control over these events to keep things moving. (To compress the exercise into a three-day weekend, the pace has to be forced by the Control Team.)

The teams are not, it should be stressed, to confine their attention to Berlin, or to Germany, or to Europe. If events dictate, strategic forces may become a dominant preoccupation, or actions quite outside the theater. Control will have to use its unseen hand to keep action from becoming too diffuse; but, in principle, the Red and Blue teams are deciding national conduct and strategy in a crisis, not just the local or regional part of that strategy and conduct.

Red and Blue teams should be no larger than four persons each. Control should be two or three with several consultants.

Military actions and events will likely be involved and may become dominant. The purpose is not, however, to explore the tactical implications of military plans; this is not a "war game". Control's military evaluations must be plausible but beyond that will be a compromise with time and will be responsive to the need to guide the game. Military detail may at times be exceedingly significant for political decisions, but military detail for its own sake is not the object.

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Results of the Exercise

It is not expected that a game of this sort can predict outcomes or test policies. There are too many arbitrary elements; and, in any case, a single "experience" could not prove much. Freedom to experiment will require that it be agreed not to take too seriously the actual course of events generated by the game.

The value lies rather in the insight and experience the exercise provides into the character of the planning and decision problem, the interaction of political and military considerations, and the problems of evaluating enemy intent from observed enemy behavior, conveying intent through actions, and judging enemy interpretation of our own intent. It is an exercise in the process of bargaining by military action as well as by words.

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